



# Population Characteristics

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## SCHOOL ENROLLMENT IN THE UNITED STATES: OCTOBER 1973

(Advance report)

Elementary school enrollment (grades 1 through 8) declined from 32.2 million students in 1972 to 31.5 million in the fall of 1973. This decline in elementary school enrollment which started in 1970-71 reflects a decrease in the number of persons of elementary school age in recent years as the children born in the mid-1960's replaced those born in the high fertility period of the 1950's. The number of births in the United States began to decline in the early 1960's and elementary school enrollment declined after 1970 as those children reached school age. The decline occurred in both private and public schools. Private elementary enrollment has declined by 1,578,000 students since 1964, to a current level of 3.3 million. Public elementary enrollment declined by about 500,000 in the past year to 28.2 million students (returning to the same level as in 1966). High school and college enrollment levels for persons under 35 years old have not changed significantly during the past 2 years; about 15.3 million students attended high school (grades 9 through 12) and 8.2 million persons 14 to 34 years old attended college. The number of persons in these ages are still unaffected by the declining trend in fertility.

These results are based on the Current Population Survey conducted in October 1973 by the Bureau of the Census; the figures are for the civilian population, excluding inmates of institutions. Although this report features the school enrollment of persons 3 to 34 years of age, 787,000 additional persons 35 years old and over were reported as enrolled in college.

Of the 8.2 million persons 14 to 34 years old enrolled in college in October 1973, 684,000 or 8 percent, were black. Although enrollment rates for blacks and whites are the same at ages 14 and 15 years old, at ages 18 to 21 years old the enrollment rate for blacks was about 8 percentage points lower than for whites, indicating that blacks are still somewhat less likely than whites to continue in school past the compulsory attendance ages. High school drop out rates (that is, the proportion of the age group not enrolled in school and not a high school graduate) were also higher for blacks than for whites at ages 18 to 21 years old. About 28 percent of blacks of that age were not enrolled in school nor high school graduates (513,000 persons) compared with 14 percent of the white population (1.8 million persons). The difference between black and white levels is about the same as it was 6 years ago.

About 1.3 million students were enrolled in nursery schools, mostly in private schools, and about 3.1 million were enrolled in kindergartens, nearly all public schools. About 24 percent of the 3- and 4-year-olds were attending schools that offered some type of formal instruction in 1973 compared with 10 percent in 1964; 93 percent of the 5- and 6-year-olds were enrolled in school in October 1973 compared with 83 percent in 1964.

About 1.8 million students 14 to 34 years old were enrolled in 2-year colleges in October 1973, representing 41 percent of the freshman and sophomore classes. There is further evidence

from the fall 1973 survey as in the 1972 survey that persons of college age are not attending college at the same high rates as in the late 1960's. About 43 percent of persons 18 and 19 years old were enrolled in school in 1973 as compared with 48 percent in 1970.

Women have been attending colleges in increasing numbers over the past 10 years, but still in 1973 more men than women were in college and men were attending at a higher rate. Women were more likely to be attending colleges at the freshman or sophomore levels than at the upper college levels. Approximately 47 percent

of freshmen were women compared with 42 percent of juniors and seniors and 36 percent of graduate students.

Since the figures presented in this report are based on sample data, they may differ from the figures that would have been obtained from a complete census. The sampling variation may be relatively large where the numbers shown are small. A more complete statement on the variability due to sampling, as well as more detailed information about the fall enrollment figures, will be issued in a later report in this series.